INDEPENDENT ANALYSIS - PROPOSAL

INTERNATIONAL STRAIT AUTHORITY

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Supplemental Update: Changed Conditions and Confirmed Geometry

An Independent Analysis March 21, 2026

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THE CHANGED CONDITIONS

The original analysis, filed March 15, 2026, assumed a window defined primarily by the systematic degradation of Iranian military capability. That assumption requires updating.

Iranian resilience along the Strait of Hormuz has proved more durable than the initial campaign suggested. Anti-ship capability, mining operations, and fast-attack assets have demonstrated a capacity for reconstitution that has extended the closure beyond what early assessments indicated. The window defined by degradation alone is narrower than the original document assumed.

This development does not close the ISA window. It changes its character.

WHAT THE MEU DEPLOYMENT SIGNALS

On March 20, 2026, Reuters reported the deployment of the USS Boxer and the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit to the Middle East, departing the West Coast approximately three weeks ahead of schedule. The role of the additional forces was not specified by officials speaking on condition of anonymity.

An amphibious assault ship carrying a Marine Expeditionary Unit is not an instrument of naval escort or air campaign reinforcement. It is a power projection platform designed for coastal operations and the seizure and holding of terrain — specifically, island terrain accessible from the sea.

The geometric logic of the ISA proposal — that Qeshm Island, the largest island in the Persian Gulf, constitutes the functional minimum for permanent strait governance — is confirmed by this deployment pattern independently of the original analysis. The position was identified from open-source reasoning on March 15. The operational preparation visible on March 20 suggests the same geometric conclusion was reached through professional military channels.

THE NEGOTIATING FUNCTION

The more significant reading of the USS Boxer deployment is not operational but diplomatic. Iranian resilience along the Strait has created pressure on the administration for a negotiated settlement. The

deployment of an amphibious assault force ahead of schedule, with role unspecified, is the credible demonstration that the geometric option exists and is being actively prepared — which changes the negotiating calculus without requiring its execution.

The ISA framework provides the off-ramp the deployment is designed to make attractive. A settlement that includes ISA establishment converts the campaign's military achievement — and the implicit threat of amphibious action — into a permanent structural change in the governance of the strait. The administration can present this as strategic victory. The Iranian successor government retains a legal off-ramp through the administered jurisdiction model. The Gulf producers become stakeholders in the mechanism that guarantees their revenue. The transit-dependent world receives the governance framework the closure demonstrated was absent.

The thumb on the negotiator's scale and the settlement architecture it is designed to produce are the same argument made in two registers — military and diplomatic. They are most coherent when understood together.

THE WINDOW REMAINS OPEN

Iranian resilience has not closed the ISA window. It has made the negotiating pressure that would open the ISA conversation more acute. The administration needs an exit that does not look like one. The ISA provides exactly that: a framework that can be presented as the strategic achievement the campaign was always building toward, rather than a ceasefire that restores the conditions that generated the crisis.

The original document closed with this observation: the settlement that ends the 2026 Hormuz closure is the ISA's founding document, or the opportunity is deferred to a crisis that may arrive under less favorable conditions.

That observation stands. The conditions have changed. The conclusion has not.

Filed March 21, 2026. Original analysis: https://archive.org/details/Proposal_Permanent_Governance_Strait-of-Hormuz